



**CALIFORNIA
HIGH-SPEED RAIL
AUTHORITY**

BRIEFING: MAY 2-3, 2012, BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM #9

To: **Chairman Richard and Authority Board Members**

From: **Mark McLoughlin, Interim Deputy Director, Environmental Planning**

Date: **May 2-3, 2012**

RE: **Materials for consideration of California High-Speed Train
Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS
Agenda Items 1, 2, 9, and 10**

Discussion

At the upcoming May 2nd/May 3rd Board meeting, the Board will address four agenda items related to the Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS:

1. Staff Presentation on the Merced to Fresno Section Final Project Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS)
2. Public Comment on Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS
9. Summary of and Brief Response to comments received on Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS
10. Consideration of Resolutions to Certify Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS, Select North/South Alignment and Station Locations, and Make Related Decisions

A Draft Project EIR/EIS for the Merced to Fresno Section was circulated for public comment between mid-August and mid-October of 2011. The Authority received over 700 public and agency comment submissions containing thousands of individual comments on the Draft EIR/EIS and the high-speed train project. On April 20, 2012, the Authority issued the Final Project EIR/EIS. The document is available on the Authority's website (<http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/final-eir-m-f.aspx>).

The May 2nd/3rd Board meeting is structured as a two-day meeting to ensure an adequate time for thorough consideration of the Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS, including additional public comment. Agenda item 1 on May 2nd provides the Authority Board with a brief staff presentation on the Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS, touching on key issues raised during the EIR/EIS process. Agenda item 2 provides the opportunity for the Board to receive public comment on the Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS. Following receipt of public comment, the Board will then address other matters on the May 2nd agenda, and reconvene on May 3rd to complete the items related to the Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS.

On May 3rd, under agenda item 9, staff will provide brief input to the Board regarding the public comment received on May 2nd and provide feedback on issues raised in the comments. Under agenda item 10, the

Board will have an opportunity to ask questions of staff, deliberate, and exercise its independent judgment to make a decision in light of the whole record presented to the Board. The decisions before the Board on May 3rd include whether to take the following actions:

- (1) Certify the Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS Final Program EIR for its compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);
- (2) adopt CEQA Findings of Fact and a Statement of Overriding Considerations;
- (3) adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program;
- (4) approve the Hybrid north/south alignment as described in the Final Project EIR/EIS, as well as the downtown Merced station location and the downtown Fresno Station at the Mariposa Street Location.
- (5) direct staff to proceed with filing a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse to complete the CEQA process and implementation of the Hybrid north/south alignment and selected station locations, including any and all additional permits.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board adopt the attached draft resolutions HSRA No. 12-19 and 12-20. HSRA No. 12-19 certifies the Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS for compliance with CEQA. HSRA No. 12-20 adopts the CEQA Findings of Fact, Statement of Overriding Considerations, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program; approves the Hybrid Alternative North/South alignment, the downtown Merced Station location, and the downtown Fresno station at Mariposa Street; and directs staff to file a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse and proceed with implementation of the approved project.

Attachments

There are multiple materials in support of agenda items 1, 2, 9, and 10:

- Executive Summary of Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS
- Highlights of Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS
- Brochure of Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS
- 1 CD-ROM containing complete text of Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS
(*These items are also available on the Authority website: <http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/final-eir-m-f.aspx>*)
- Addendum to Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS
- Errata to Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS
- Draft Resolution HSRA No. 12-19 Certifying the Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS for Compliance with CEQA
- Draft Resolution HSRA No. 12-20 Adopting CEQA Findings of Fact, a Statement of Overriding Considerations, and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and approving the Hybrid Alternative north/south alignment as described in the Merced to Fresno Section Final Project EIR/EIS, the downtown Merced Station Location and the Downtown Fresno at Mariposa Street Station at the Mariposa Street Location
 - Exhibit A to Draft Resolution HSRA No. 12-20, CEQA Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations
 - Exhibit B to Draft Resolution HSRA No. 12-20, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program